Interview with [M1]

M = Ministerial participant

The following conventions are used in transcription of spoken interviews:

[replacement information in square brackets]

[redacted information in grey in square brackets]

[?] = unintelligible missing word(s); immediately following word = unclear[?]

[#] = redacted numerical information

CAPITALS to signify emphasis in speaking

((Extraneous information in double brackets))

Researcher

OK. Brilliant. So yeah, just again to give you a very quick overview. We’re looking at how English is being increasingly used for academic programs in different places in Europe. So we started with the Netherlands um because they were quite early implementers of English for academic programs. I'm looking at Austria, and some other people are looking at some other places. So we're trying to create um a kind of composite image of different parts of Europe at different stages of this development, where it looks like there's this TREND, kind of an increasing trend towards using English in in higher education.

So yeah, maybe just to start, I I looked you up on [internet resource]. And I saw you're the the [role] of the, is that right?

[M1]

Yeah.

Researcher

Yeah, of the [ministerial unit]. And you used to, or perhaps you still are, but I saw that you used to be in charge [redacted identifying information].

[M1]

So I'm I'm not sure, I'm not sure that I I understood correctly. So my function is [role].

Researcher

OK.

[M1]

[Redacted identifying information.]

Researcher

Right. Right. That's great. So if I just kind of launch into my questions, I hope you don't mind. I saw that the Universities Act in 2002 mentions that there's a counter current principle or a ‘Gegenstromprinzip’ between the BMBWF and the universities. So I was wondering, you know what this kind of means in practice in your experience? How is there an exchange, a flow between both levels of governance?

[M1]

So, we have in Austria a very strong principle of autonomy in the fields of public universities, founded in the University Law of 2002. And the GOVERNANCE of public universities and I I I focus on on, on the public universities for the time being.

Researcher

Yeah.

[M1]

Is that they are autonomous that they work within the legal framework, the university law and that they get um a budget by the state, so we negotiate every THIRD year, every third year we negotiate performance agreements, but the Austrian um um [?] or the Austrian performance agreement is not only dedicated to the to especially performance agreements only, not only to the job[?] of financing, but it's a 360 degree funding package.

So that's institutional funding together with a budget for certain targets or objectives and so on, and the universities get it for a three-year period. And that's a negotiation process. So, at the system level we worked with policy documents, strategies, systemic targets, and so on. And then we say OK from the system perspective we would like that YOU individual university does it or working that [?] and so on. The university develops an OWN development plan. So they're coming from the institutional level, and then it's a kind of negotiation, discussion process and it takes between six months and a year to find a common picture and find a common ground for the next three years.

That's the principle. So that's that's what you call as ‘Gegenstromprinzip’. So we come, we come from the systemic perspective, university comes from the institutional perspective, and then we try to find a solution GIVEN a certain budget framework, because the budget is given, yeah. And then we we try to to find an agreement where both sides can realize targets, perspectives, views, opinions.

Researcher

So, can I ask what do you mean by systemic targets. Are are these, are these related to the objectives in the National Development Plan? So the, do you call it GUEP, or what's, sorry GUEP?

[M1]

Yeah.Yeah. Yeah, yeah, we have since I think 6 or 9 years we have the so-called ‘Gesamtösterreichische Universitätsentwicklungsplan’, and that's the the the strategic paper coming from the systemic perspective and as we don't work with with metrics in in this in inside this this document, but of course with qualitative developments and dreams[?] and and and

and systemic perspectives. And we have individual strategies as well with single[?] topics, single[?] topic strategies. For example, we have uh the national strategy for mobility and internationalization in the field of higher education. So that's a dedicated strategy for ALL higher education institutions in Austria, and inside this strategy of course we have topics like internationalization of curricular development and implementing of study programs in English or other foreign languages and so on and so on, so these documents are the basis for for, for the for the steering and governance of of the universities.

Researcher

Do you have, umm, because when you've been talking, I mean, what, what is the kind of bottom upwards drive? Do the universities help to inform the National Development Plan as well? Do you get feedback on the from the universities on your systemic goals, your targets?

[M1]

Of course, of course, it's it's always done this way that we we write the draft and then we go into a consultation and then we listen to the universities whether they have good arguments from all perspectives or not, and that we take the GOOD points in the into the document, and points where we have our own opinion we leave as such ((laughing)).

Yeah, that's that's the way how we develop strategy papers on the systemic level, yeah.

Researcher

So do you get informed, do you get feedback from is it 22 public universities you have at the moment?

[M1]

22 public universities.

Researcher

Do you get it from all of them?

[M1]

ALL of them. Yeah, almost. It depends on the on the consultation, of course. We cannot force them to to give a feedback individually, but yeah.

Researcher

Yeah. And um that would be the rectors, would it, that you get the feedback from?

[M1]

From the rectors or from the vice rectors, yeah, it depends.

Researcher

OK, great. So, I'm wondering about specific ob-, obviously I'm looking at English um so goals that seem relevant to me in the National Development Plan are internationalization, ‘Förderung des Nachwuchses’, in terms of doctoral schools um and in terms of maybe German, 'Gesellschaftliche Verantwortung', because I I get the impression that often the reason why universities might keep German language programs is also through their interaction with with Austrian society?

So I was wondering in terms of internationalization, I mean you have you have an an international- internationalization strategy document as well, don't you? But that's for all four, is it for three sectors like the Applied, University of Applied Sciences?

[M1]

Yep. That's a holistic strategy. Yeah.

Researcher

Yeah. Does that include private universities or not? How much influence do you have over private universities or is that just outside the?

[M1]

We think[?] them INCLUDED in such a strategy, but we cannot influence them. So they are independent, of course, and they, technically, they can do what they want. Yeah, but of course, we cannot leave them out. So we always include[?] them, but there is no, no effective governance or steering process.

Researcher

Yeah. So in in this internationalization document, I I guess it's quite is it quite a new document?

[M1]

Yeah.

Researcher

It says that you, although it's UP to the universities, you know, which strategy they adopt. So they have autonomy of choice in which kind of strategy of internationalization to adopt. But it IS assumed that they will HAVE a strategy of interna- internationalization.

[M1]

Of course.

Researcher

And and it also says that you will kind of monitor this through steering instruments. So I'm wondering how that works. How does that work?

[M1]

OK, so we have in in in periodical times uh we we have a so so-called 'Begleitgespräche', controlling talks, or we have networks, network events and and the responsible [unit] in my [unit] is is is ohh continuously in contact with the international offices with the vice rectors responsible for internationalization. So we have a a a good picture about the the instruments implemented on site, we have um continuous dialogue with the institution, and it's the way how we accompany the development of the institutions.

Researcher

Right.

[M1]

Inside the performance agreements, of course, from time to time, we have qualitative and quantitative targets, but basically we work with, with dialogue, with quality developments and and the discussion of the institutional strategy since, as you said, almost EVERY university or Higher Education Institution has has an OWN strategy paper or part of the development plan where the strategy of internationalisation is is, is, is, is, is shown so.

And it's especially the use of English or the development of English study programs is is is a is a CORE area of internationalization and the reputation of management of universities. So we have especially in the field[?] of the past study programs, universities which have which offer actually almost

ALL master study master programs in English. The [university name], for example, is such a university since several years. Or we we create or are in the process of of founding a new institution in [city] for digitalization, digital sciences and the working language will be English COMPLETELY, so there are developments ongoing in this field and the NUMBER of English study programs is increasing from year to year.

Researcher

So I mean um.

[M1]

Yeah, at the moment we have with OTHER discussions, and if you listen to me, you see, I am not an a fluent or excellent English speaker, and the discussions WE have is how can we assure the QUALITY of the spoken English the used English in the lecture halls since we have German speaking professors, scientists, and is the quality used is the is the quality of used English a good one, in order to teach in a quality way the the topics and the discipline. So that's a very important discussion in this time of reform and implementing new new programs in English.

Researcher

Who is this discussion amongst, between the universities and the ministry or?

[M1]

Universities, ministries and the Science Councils or a general academic discussion, not the written, not the, but it's a topic. It's a topic. Everybody, I mean, each time when we just when we raise the the the topic of international or English study program, the university says OK we see the point that we are working on it, but it's a real important issue to safe secure the quality of the language knowledge of the scientists and professors/officers[?].

Researcher

And how do you how do you do that? Have any proposals been put forward of how to do it or how quality assurance or?

[M1]

That's not the level where we as a ministry intervene. That's that's the that's the thing[?] of the universities and higher education institutions. They have to verify it.

Researcher

OK. So it's up to them and they don't need to prove that quality to you in any way.

[M1]

No, no.

Researcher

It's it's their own business basically. Right. Um so, I mean, like you said, it is assumed that they will HAVE an internationalization strategy even though it's up to THEM. Um where does this assumption come from? Is that something that's just that you're both in alignment with, for example, the ministry and the universities have a similar view that internationalization is the way forward or?

Who is promoting the internationalization?

[M1]

That's that's the ministry and there is a very vivid community um INSIDE the higher education institutions and INSIDE the university. So that's, that's the way we have to do it. So there is no,

in contrast, maybe to other other countries like maybe Italy, where we had, I think a very complicated discussion five years ago. Even a constitutional LAW based discussion ((laughs)), whether it's allowed for universities to USE English or to to offer ALL programs in English, and I think there there are similar discussions in Germany from time to time, we we don't have this discussion in Austria. So we we have a very high rate of international- internationalization activities.

There is ENOUGH space, um in the higher education area for only German speaking study programs. So that's a development and that's a kind of generic generic development, so there is no necessity for anybody to be the the uh, a pushing factor for this reform or for this development. It is SOMEHOW natural.

Researcher

And how about in the EARLY stages, so after the 2002 reform um and when like for example in university development plans one can see that there's discussion of how to internationalize or attract students or what do you do you recall it within the historical context where this kind of internationalization drive came from? Was it again kind of equally the ministry and the universities or was it more from the bottom up or from the top downwards or, do you have any insights into the historical context?

[M1]

I think it was a PARALLEL movement, both from the institutions and the ministry. Austria was a very strong supporter of the Bologna process since the 1990s. We had ALWAYS a very strong position of the ministry in favor of internationalization and Europeanization of the Austrian higher education system. And we had a a sparkling community for internationalization inside the institution so.

Um, that was a smooth parallel development into one direction without the complex discussions without problems without conflicts.

Researcher

Right, right.

[M1]

So of course, I think it was about 2010, maybe that's a cornerstone or marking stone somehow there was a special BOOST of internationalization, so the the, the, the um the relevance of international networks, the relevance of international networks for their own reputation to find cooperating cooperation partners outside Austria and all this stuff led to the fact that the institution itself developed internationalization uh strategies.

Again, it was the [university name], the first university who offered US the idea we WANT a COMPLETE CHANGE of our study program. We want to get we want to teach and to work in English. And and we said OK, but we have to talk about HOW you will do this. We cannot fund um English courses for ALL your staff from from the man at the entrance up to the rector, also we have to find the way how it is feasible and how it's uh meaningful but they took this development of networking, international coorporation, reputation management, and of course to use international cooperation in order to develop their own quality.

Researcher

Can I ask what ways did you find to deal with it then? So, you said, you can't provide English tuition or courses to all of the staff. We have to find a way to, so what way?

[M1]

It's too expensive.

Researcher

Sorry?

[M1]

It's too expensive, it's too expensive.

Researcher

Yeah, sure, sure. But what what then, was the solution to the to the problem?

[M1]

A process working on these challenge[?] step by step. Start somewhere and then to proceed. So that was the solution.

Researcher

Oh so to gradually implement.

[M1]

Yeah, of course. Yeah. So step by step by step and to start, I mean. The policy area internationalization and the necessary money for investing in this [?] is always in in concurrence with with general teaching investments or or research investments. So you'll have to to to have a you have to work on a holistic budget. We don't use individual budget lines. We have ONE budget for university and then the university has to say how to use it, so we don't have um individual fundings for internationalization or for teaching and learning or for research. So in Austria it's altogether [?] and the university has to set priorities.

Researcher

And how about appointments from abroad? Was that one of the solutions or was it not such a, was it not considered in this discussion with [university name]?

[M1]

No, this was very constructive way and they said, OK, we we start with some special master programs or with special institutes or some faculties and then we do work in the next years in the ENLARGEMENT of this internationalisation.

Researcher

Okay, so it sounds from what you're saying, like the ministry and the universities are often in alignment in terms of what they're trying to achieve or you know their objectives. Um are there any ever um points of difference with respect to any of these types of issues that you've come across?

[M1]

No, there is, there is a very large harmony.

Of course, there is one special point always that the respective communities always say we need special money for internationalization activities, because otherwise we cannot implement it in the

yeah, in in the core of the formal, how we would WISH to implement it. So the earmarking, earmarking discussion of budget, yeah, that's always a tricky issue.

Researcher

OK. So then the Ministry's National Development Plan was written into the Universities Act 2002 in 2018? So I was wondering, do you know why it became written into the Universities Act that the ministry should also produce a national development plan? What what led to its implementation in the Universities Act?

[M1]

Sorry? I I don't, I don't know whether I understood correctly. So you mean what is the REASON that we introduced the the the national development plan?

Researcher

Yeah, and and also wrote it into so it became part of the legal framework in in 2018. So for what reason did it become the part of the legal framework in 2018?

[M1]

OK. Maybe it's a kind of answer to the discussion as a general answer. In 2002, when, when the Austrian politics started with the university law 2002, there was NO coordination mechanism for the university area Austria. The idea was that the universities coordinate them by themselves in a spontaneous holistic way, but the CONTRARY was the case. So we had a decentralized and centrifugal development without ANY coordination, with with duplicities with

artistic[?] developments and so, so and that's why, let's say 5, 7, 8 years later we became the discussion we need in Austria a kind of coordination a kind of Austrian university plan, so that university, so that the broad public knows what politics wants, where universities go, yeah.

So and it was PRETTY difficult to DEVELOP such a paper such a strategy in that we needed it I think five years to come to the first national development plan. And then we had this discussion with the universities, "we don't ACCEPT it, what is the NATURE of this document, why do we NEED it, ba- ba- ba- ba- ba- ba- ba- ba-" ((mimicking repeated objections on the part of universities)).

And and. And then we said, OK, there IS a necessity for a framework, a framework paper, and if you don't accept it, then we write it into the law, then you HAVE to accept it. End the character of the discussion.

Researcher

OK, so do they feel that their own autonomy was under threat by it? Is that where the resistance came from?

[M1]

They don't want the coordination or the framework management of the ministry. That's the nature of autonomous universities.

Researcher

OK. How about, um so I heard that you have a new national development plan that's going to embrace the three, I guess three sectors, not the private ones, but the three sectors. What- what's the reason for them having an one above, you know, that that is for ALL of the sectors with within your remit.

[M1]

OK. As I said, we, you have to look at the Austrian higher education system. We have uh 22 public universities and that's so-called the historic, I mean, core core area of higher education in Austria. We have still I think 75% of students there. But we have also about 20 universities of applied sciences in a different embedded in a different way of governance and with[?] a kind of private public partnership. And then we have, yeah, higher education institutions responsible for teacher education. Umm, and then we have the private universities of private education institutions.

Um, there are different funding responsibilities, there are different mission responsibilities, but there are of course SOME targets, SOME objectives and SOME issues which are relevant for the whole higher education system. And for THESE selected topics, we need an umbrella. And that's the reason why we we have this way of working for SPECIAL strategy like for internationalization, or we have all the strategy for the SOCIAL dimension higher education which work with ALL sectors.

And where we are working right now is on a Austrian higher education plan, which is really dedicated to the MAIN development targets and objectives for ALL sectors. So the number of graduates or some societal challenges or for the question of internationalization as well or for the question of supporting uh female students and female researchers. And so so some some topics, some issues which are REALLY relevant for ALL higher education types.

Researcher

Right. Do do the different sectors then, the different types of institution retain their kind of separate profiling within within that? So I mean, when I look at the BMBWF website, it seems to kind of, it describes the sectors quite differently. So it they they complement each other, they're not in competition with each other because they're playing different games ((laughing)), so to speak.

And so um, do they still retain these different spheres of characterization and operation

that make them different types of institution?

[M1]

That's a difficult question. That's, the the, the, the, the, the, the, that's this huge field[?] of differentiation discussions and of course basically there are different majors of study programs at universities. And of course, individual universities of applied sciences, different kind of MAKING of them and the different content, BUT I'm quite sure that because we have a very intensive combination of university study programs in Austria, even in THIS sector, it's a very LARGE differentiation and difference in in quality and making of and and and and all this stuff.

So but basically, in their profiles universities, respectively, universities of applied sciences, but we have of course this this academic shift. So the universities of applied sciences want to do much more in, in research, they want to get the the right of PhD awardings. And so yeah. And and

the universities say no, only WE are the area of basic research and it's not allowed to give grants[?] so. Yeah, it's an ongoing process since 10 years.

Researcher

Do you think they might succeed in being allowed to award PhDs at universities of applied sciences? Is it something that looks like it might happen in the future or?

[M1]

We introduced 2 years ago, we introduced a kind of cooperation structure between universities and universities of applied science, so that the latter one can participate in in, in, in doctoral schools and then can use doctoral schools for all own research topics, projects, or the development of own research personnel, so that stuff. So I I think for the time being we have a good solution, but I cannot

I cannot tell you where what what the future will bring. So we have intensive developments in Bavaria and in Hessen, some German federal, some German states, developments which will allow universities of applied science to to provide to doctoral programs alone, not only in cooperation, and I think that in, in, in, in the VERY long run there will be a similar development in Austria as well, but for the time being, the ministry differentiates STRICTLY between PhD awarding rights, something only for universities, so in universities of applied sciences are NOT allowed to give out PhDs.

Researcher

Do you think there's a difference in how much English is increasing between public universities and universities of applied sciences sciences or that their approach to internationalization by may be driven by different factors? No?

[M1]

Maybe the development the question of internationalization is basically similar in both sectors. SOME universities of applied sciences are MUCH more international actors and players

than public universities. So they are much MORE interested in providing English, English study programs. So but, in the in a big taking the big picture, there is not differentiation, both both types of higher education institutions participate in work on internationalization processes and hmm.

Researcher

How about the funding system it changed didn't it, like a few years ago? Uh was that 2018 as well, 2018, 2019, it was implemented in full um to include PARTLY include about a 1/3, am I right, with per capita student, active student, um funding. So did it then become more similar to universities of applied sciences?

[M1]

No, not at all, of course it is the the shift[?] of 'Studiumplatzfinanzierung', the idea that the university gets the real amount it needs for quality based teaching process for for its students, that's the idea of 'Studiumplatzfinanzierung'. But due to the starting points and the huge numbers of of students at the universities at the public university, it's not possible to introduce from one

day to the other uh an effective study place oriented funding system, so but the IDEA is to approach

approach such a system, yeah, taking maybe two or three periods. And of course, under the precondition that that we have the the public public money for doing this ((laughing)), yeah, it's always the question. Do we have the money for real study, study, place oriented funding system?

Researcher

So sorry if if I understood you, perhaps I misunderstood you, but the the idea is then to increase the the proportion of money that comes from per capita funding also for public universities?

[M1]

That's somehow the idea, that's somehow the idea, yeah.

Researcher

But why is that?

[M1]

It's still a long way to go.

Researcher

Why? Why is that seen favorably? Why is that the goal?

[M1]

Because uh we have really a HUGE problem of massification at public universities in Austria. REALLY, we have students-staff ratios more than one hundred 120. Yeah. So we don't talk about

1 to 20, so we have in some areas 1 to 150. So and and we have to yeah, to, to and and and

how to say? It would be a system collapse in order this is it would be a system collapse if we give the REAL necessary amount per capita the university, as we do at the universities of public sciences, um at applied sciences and we would need, I think, the four times higher university budget.

And we could NOT work with this budget, we have too less scientists, professors, so there are SYSTEMIC questions how to change such a situation in the system. That's why we say, OK, we started and it's not a real[?] study place oriented funding system but we want to reach it in 10 years maybe in 15 years. It's a development, step by step.

Researcher

But but why do you want to reach it? Why is that seen as a a good model to aim for?

[M1]

Because then you have transparency and quality. You have to to to to combine transparency and quality.

Researcher

OK. But obviously with the universities you're still going to factor in things like research into the funding, so it can never be mainly based on per per head of student.

[M1]

It depends. It depends on the calculation of course. Because in Austria with the study place oriented funding system for the universities of applied sciences we DON'T finance research activities. So it's also uh almost 99% oriented teaching and learning mechanism. So that's the the aim to reach a similar situation at the universities is in in this sense a target, an objective for the next 10 years.

Researcher

But the universities also have to focus on RESEARCH, though, so.

[M1]

Of course, yeah. The funding of research is part of the performance agreements, the second pillar of funding.

Researcher

Yeah. Yeah. Can I ask why was the funding system changed?

[M1]

Because it was not transparent and it was not capacity oriented. We had the funding system, which didn't look at the number of students. You cannot, you cannot fund a quality univers- university in a quality quality. Sorry ((laughing)), [redacted identifying information] [?] project to implement in Austria the capacity orientation. But if only if you fund the capacities you need, you can reach the QUALITY which is necessary.

So, there was no understanding in Austria on on these relations. So the open access to higher education to universities was the holy cow and what the most important principle. Nobody discussed the QUALITY of teaching processes, nobody discussed the student-staff ratios? Nobody you know, all this, so capacity - funding - quality ((laughing)), they are relation.

Researcher

Can I ask? So, I mean, is this the 'freier Hochschulzugang', you call it a holy cow? Is it still a holy cow, do you think? Or is the ideology shifting? Is it changing in Austrian society or also in the ministry and universities?

[M1]

The the there is a huge difference between today and the year 2000. But, of course there are [?]

Leftist or Social Democrats, that political developments, which are AGAINST entrance examins or AGAINST capacity oriented mechanisms. They want to have the open access and they want that there is enough money for all students. But that's an illusion that the there will be always enough money in order to have all students funded. So it's it's not the situation and we have a a problematic situation up to 2010 and, but I think there is more and more the acceptance that universities need capacity regulations and then there is, I mean, even in this school classes for everybody is

reasonable that one teacher cannot teach 50 pupils. So in Austria we work with one to 25 for one to [?] to 25, or in the kindergarten yeah one you know so, but at the HIGHER education level nobody discussed the question what is a quality oriented relation between scientists and students, and I think this this topic is through and it's a good fundament, but of course there are still different different political ideologies.

Researcher

Umm. So in the um latest national development plan, it mentioned "Bologna-Ziele konforme Erhöhung der Anzahl der Bildungsabschlüsse an Universitäten, Fachhochschulen und Privatuniversitäten". So, does Bologna have any factor into um I guess the desire to have more students? Is there any kind of influence? No?

[M1] No, no, no, no. Bologna conformity only means a sustainable reform of the studies' architecture. And in Austria we already reached, I think, to have, let's say, more than 90% of study programs within the Bologna architecture. So, that was the reason.

Researcher

So that's what it means when it says "Erhöhung der Anzahl der Bildungsabschlüsse"?

[M1]

Yeah, efficiency orientation, we have a a huge problem with dropouts. Because it much more

students at the beginning that creates[?] again, and we have to work to a more efficient and effective study process. Umm. And we don't want to lose such many students during the study life cycle.

Researcher

Can I ask in the national development plan, it doesn't actually mention language in the the latest one, but I noticed for example in a university development plan that I was looking at that the English has become more visible in their development plans. So, um if if the university presents a development plan to the BMBWF and it LOOKS like they're expanding courses in English, is that viewed favorably?

[M1]

Yeah, that's that's it's it's it's a GOOD development and that's OK, and we are happy if they do this.

Researcher

Is it taken as a sign of, what's it taken as a sign of then when you see, OK, there are more English programs? What does that tell you in terms of your objectives, how it aligns with your objectives?

[M1]

Yeah, I mean that's, the, the contribution to the further internationalization of the Austrian higher education system. That's very important in order to get to more international students into Austria, and it's important to to maybe to better study option options for AUSTRIAN students, so that they can study at home in an international, yeah in the international frame, yeah.

Researcher

And also in the in this latest one you kind of expand the concept of internationalization drawing on Betty Leask, so her international curriculum. And I was wondering where where did that come from that you felt the need to expand this concept also to the hidden curriculum, and you know, create this part of the national development plan.

[M1]

Yeah, I mean, I'm this idea to to, to create and to to offer a an internationalised curriculum is also an an topic coming from the social dimension of higher education. So to you have in Austria you have an in every higher education system many, many students which are not in the in this situation to go out to participate in exchange programs to be mobile in in in Europe or in the world. So it's very important to internationalize the curriculum HERE in Austria. And of course, in order to give the response to a more and more global world AND to give a response to the global challenges, so it's a holistic approach which is much more than only in English or not in English.

Researcher

Yeah, no, I was wondering what where it is Betty Leask come from? Was it within the ministry or from universities that suggested her concept of?

[M1]

I don't, I don't have no idea. I think she's a she's an expert being active in many processes and during the last last 10 years and then there is no special ((trails off)).

Researcher

You don't know how it ended up in the National Development Plan?

[M1]

No.

Researcher

I have a question about the Universities Act, and I was wondering if you happened to know in paragraph 63a8 is that that universities are allowed to restrict numbers of students for foreign language programs, where they can't for German programs. So I was wondering if you know WHY that is.

[M1]

It is a historic reason. I mean, if you have a problem with your capacities, you have not enough scientists, teachers, but you have too many students, and you have no instruments for regulating the entrance, what it would be the reaction if very a reputational university like the [university name] would introduce new English English master programs or English bachelor programs? The whole WORLD would come ((laughing)) in order to study in Austria WITHOUT study fees, WITHOUT, you have ALWAYS to think about we don't have study fees in Austria.

It is a difference to other English speaking to other English speaking areas and the that was the very important point. If a university offers English speaking programs, it WAS allowed to to fix the numbers, otherwise it would be overload. Because you have a VERY reputational university like the [university name] in [city], which offers a English program without study fees, without entrance exams. WOW! So, it WAS necessary in order to secure and to save the university.

Researcher

The the UG also I think it mentioned that for German language programs you need to have quite a low level like A2 or something, but when you look at in practice universities tend to set it at C1 for their programs or the the courses set them for C1. So I was wondering if you know why there is such a difference between what is in the legal framework and the actual practice that universities adopt.

So they tend to ask for C1 language requirement for German programs?

[M1]

That's that's at accepted practice in order to have a yeah, the base for, for creative and for productive teaching and learning process.

Researcher

Have uh, I mean, somebody mentioned and I don't know if this is true or not, but somebody mentioned that at the time because of the 'freier Hochschulzugang' that and also if you had a low level of requirement for German that at the time in the past universities had had problems and had got into problems with the Office of Migration in Austria. Do you know anything about that or is it nothing that you're aware of?

[M1]

I mean we we have we have the migration policy, the migration situation was not so easy, maybe maybe 10 years, 15 years ago. I think it it's now it's definitely BETTER since there are

other migration ideas and policy targets, and I think that higher education is much more important and accepted than 15 years ago or 10 years ago.

Researcher

OK. And when I looked at the university database for Austria, I noticed that the appointments for professors from Germany was monitored, well collated, the data were collated separately from the rest of the EU, so the statistics are shown separately, and I was wondering if you might know why, what the reason for that is to to collate the data on appointments from Germany and Switzerland separately from the rest of the EU.

[M1]

Of course. Um I I mean there's what is REALLY internationalization ((laughing)). And of course, in the field[?] of university governance or in the analyses for the fundaments of university governance, we we NEED to know where the fields of recruitments are. And it's not a REAL internationalization if universities, Austrian universities only yeah, work with German speaking or with professors from Germany, Switzerland, or [?]. We want professors and scientists from France, UK, Brazil, South Africa, Japan, China, you know, so from there beyond Europe.

And of course, the reason behind are language. They speak German, they can easier work in Austria, there are the networks inside the disciplines. So maybe the connections in in the so-called D-A-C-H region, 'DACH Region', are much more closer. So there are national mechanisms.

And of course, it's more difficult to overview[?] INTERNATIONAL markets in order to to search and to identify INTERNATIONAL researchers, tend to use only the German speaking area. And that's one of our critic- most critical points in the discussions in the steering of universities. That we say you HAVE to call at professors and scientists from other regions as well. You, much more intensive than you do it for the time being.

Researcher

OK. So you monitor and then you when you're discussing the actual funding or the development plans, you put?

[M1]

Exactly, yeah. We bring it into the discussions, we we we we we challenge the universities the rectorates and say what are you doing what are your developments and so on, but of course there IS a good development but maybe a too slow one ((laughing)).

Researcher

Right. And I noticed also in the same database, so I mean, it said Bologna monitoring, but this is coming from you, isn't it?

[M1]

Yeah.

Researcher

It's not. It's not because of any influence through Bologna, the process. It's coming from you yourselves, is it?

[M1]

Exactly.

Researcher

OK. And I noticed that the subject areas that are listed in the database, it has the ISCED subjects listed so the code for the subject that's taught, but it doesn't include the language of instruction in the data that you collate. And are there any plans to start collating data on the the medium of instruction in addition to the subject area?

[M1]

No, no.

Researcher

Are you not interested in?

[M1]

We have, we have, we have the problem that we are al- always criticized by the higher education institutions that we collect TOO many data and that we want TOO many reports and that that's everything a burden. So we stopped to introduce new information the collection of new information, new data. So for the time being, I don't, I don't see this.

Researcher

Do you think anyone would be interested in knowing those data? In terms of, umm, not only the subject area but the language the subject area is taught IN?

[M1]

Yeah, of course. It would be interesting, but maybe in the future I don't know. For the time being, I cannot cannot say anything that [?].

Researcher

Finally, it's there anything that you'd like to mention that I didn't give you a chance to talk about it in relation to this topic so.

[M1]

No, actually everything fine. I mean, there's a, it's a easygoing policy [?] internationalization and the question of studying programs in English. Umm. As I said, in 2017, there was a very strange discussion in Italy, which came a bit to us as well from the nationalistic parties. Where are the boundaries of English, English speaking or English study programs? And then I, yeah, I think it's it's it's disappeared again, and I think we have a very strong and committed community in the field of International Affairs so it's it's everything fine.

The MOST problematic aspect is the recruitment of scientists and professors, to get THEM from English speaking areas and not only from Germany or Switzerland. So I it's the most important and then and CRITICAL question.

Well, thank you.

Researcher

Thanks so much for your time. It's been really, really helpful. Would it be possible to send me your consent form, completed?

[M1]

Yeah, yeah. Of course. You'll get it, yeah.

Researcher

OK. Thank you again.

[M1] Yeah. You're welcome. Bye. Thank you.

Researcher

Bye then. Bye.